MARVEL LEGACY

CAGED!

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WALKER
SANNA
MENYZ

LUKE CAGE®

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While imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, **Luke Cage** was subjected to medical experiments that gave him superhuman strength and bulletproof skin. Once free, he used his abilities to become a Hero for Hire, protecting people who had nowhere else to turn. His mission has taken him to Wakanda, the Savage Land, even Avengers Mansion, but Luke has never forgotten where he came from.

PREVIOUSLY: Luke Cage has been away from home for far too long. Finally back in New York, now he's taking the time to reconnect with what matters most.

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THE HOME OF LUKE CAGE AND JESSICA JONES.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

LUKE CAGE
SUPER HERO. HUSBAND. FATHER.
NOT IN THAT ORDER.

JESSICA JONES
SUPER HERO. WIFE. MOTHER.
NOT IN THAT ORDER.

ONE OF THE KIDS AT HER DAYCARE HAS BEEN BULLYING HER--THE LITTLE $%#@. IF HE WASN'T A TODDLER, I'D...

AND... WELL...YOU KNOW...

NO, I DON'T KNOW.

NEITHER OF US HAS BEEN AROUND AS MUCH AS WE SHOULD'VE BEEN. I THINK SHE'S FEELING... ABANDONED.

DAMN.

I KNOW OUR LIFE CAN GET CRAZY, I WAS HOPING WE COULD SHIELD HER FROM THAT...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...

OF COURSE YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO. SHE NEEDS CUDDLE TIME. YOU PROBABLY NEED IT, TOO.

YOU AND HER-- THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT ME FROM LOSIN' MY MIND ALL THIS TIME.

HEY, PEANUT.

MOMMY SAYS YOU'VE BEEN HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME. WANNA TALK ABOUT IT?

NO.

DANIELLE CAGE-JONES

DAUGHTER OF LUKE AND JESSICA.

OKAY.

WHAT ABOUT...

...CUDDLE TIME?

HUGG

CUDDLE TIME?

YEAH. I NEED SOME HUGS.

NOBODY CUDDLES LIKE YOU.

PAPA, WILL YOU TELL ME A STORY?

SURE.

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT THE TIME I BEAT UP DR. DOOM BECAUSE HE OWED ME MONEY.

NOT THAT STORY. YOU TELL THAT ONE ALL THE TIME.

UM... OKAY...

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT HOW ME AND YOUR UNCLE DANNY BECAME THE BEST SUPER HERO TEAM IN THE WORLD.

YOU TELL THAT ONE ALL THE TIME, TOO. IT'S BORING.

I WANT TO HEAR A NEW STORY.

A NEW STORY?

YEAH!

MAKE IT UP FROM YOUR HEAD!

OKAY...

"...ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A KING NAMED KING LUKE AND HIS BELOVED DAUGHTER, PRINCESS DANIELLE.

I DON'T WANT TO BE A PRINCESS.

MOMMY SAYS BEING A PRINCESS IS FOR WEAK GIRLS WHO ARE WAITING TO BE SAVED BY A PRINCE.

HUH...

MOMMY SAID THAT?

SO, I DON'T WANT TO BE A PRINCESS. UNLESS...

...CAN I BE A PRINCESS WHO IS A ***SUPER HERO?*** THAT WAY, I DON'T NEED TO BE SAVED BY A PRINCE.

SURE, YOU CAN BE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE.

OKAY. LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY SUPER-POWERS.

"I'M PRINCESS DANIELLE AND I HAVE MAGICAL POWERS AND I CAN TALK TO FLOWERS AND MAKE THEM DO THINGS FOR ME AND I CAN CONTROL RAINBOWS."

THOSE ARE THE BEST POWERS OF ALL TIME.

I KNOW.

BUT ***THAT'S NOT ALL...***

"MY HANDS CAN TURN INTO SNAKES. NOT BAD SNAKES--LIKE RATTLE-SNAKES--BUT GOOD SNAKES, EVEN THOUGH THEY CAN EAT THE FACE OFF OF BAD GUYS LIKE DR. DOOM."

"HANDS THAT TURN INTO SNAKES?"

"YEAH. AND THE SNAKES HAVE NAMES...

"...ONE IS A GIRL SNAKE NAMED ASTRID, AND THE OTHER IS A BOY SNAKE NAMED HERMAN.

"THEY'RE BROTHER AND SISTER, AND IF YOU'RE A BAD GUY THEY WILL EAT YOUR FACE."

THAT WORKS FOR ME--HANDS THAT TURN INTO SNAKES.

OKAY, SO WE HAVE KING LUKE AND PRINCESS DANIELLE...

"...ALTHOUGH SHE'S MORE THAN A PRINCESS, SHE'S A SUPER HERO, AND HER HANDS CAN TURN INTO SNAKES. SO, ONE DAY, KING LUKE AND PRINCESS DANIELLE FACED A ***TERRIBLE THREAT***...

"...AN EVIL DRAGON THREATENED TO DESTROY THEIR KINGDOM. BUT BECAUSE PRINCESS DANIELLE HAD SUPER-POWERS, THE DRAGON WAS IN FOR SOME SERIOUS TROUBLE."

PAPA?

YEAH, SWEETIE--WHAT IS IT?

UM...I LIKE DRAGONS. UNCLE DANNY HAS A PET DRAGON AND HE'S NICE TO ME AND I WOULDN'T WANT TO BEAT HIM UP BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE MEAN.

NO PROBLEM. I CAN THINK OF ANOTHER MONSTER THEY CAN FIGHT.

I KNOW!

"THEY COULD FIGHT TROLLS!"

MEAN AND EVIL TROLLS WHO DO MEAN AND EVIL THINGS. AND THEN... AND THEN...

"...AND THEN...KING LUKE AND PRINCESS DANIELLE FIGHT THE EVIL AND MEAN TROLLS. AND THEN KING LUKE SMOOSHES THEM. AND THEN... PRINCESS DANIELLE EATS THEIR FACES WITH HER SNAKE HANDS."

THE SNAKES EAT THE FACES OF THE TROLLS?

YES. I ALREADY TOLD YOU THAT.

BUT THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING...

"...THE TROLLS HAVE A LEADER AND HIS NAME IS HATE-FACE AND HE HATES EVERYTHING, WHICH MAKES HIM UGLY BECAUSE HATE IS UGLY. BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.

"HATE-FACE HAS PET BIRDS, BUT THEY ARE MONSTER BIRDS CALLED YUCK-BIRDS AND THE YUCK-BIRDS POOP ON EVERYTHING."

HATE-FACE?

MONSTER BIRDS THAT POOP ON EVERYTHING?

MAGIC POOP.

AND THE POOP IS GREEN WITH PURPLE POLKA DOTS.

I LIKE THAT. THE POOP IS A NICE TOUCH.

MAGIC POOP.

SO, WE HAVE HATE-FACE AND HIS MAGIC-POOPING MONSTER BIRDS...

"...THEY KIDNAP PRINCESS DANIELLE."

PAPA, THAT'S NOT HOW THE STORY GOES.

IT'S NOT?

NO. WHAT HAPPENED IS THIS...

"...HATE-FACE AND HIS EVIL TROLLS ATTACKED KING LUKE. AND THEN...

"...HATE-FACE USED HIS MAGIC TO MAKE KING LUKE FROZENED IN PLACE AND HE COULDN'T MOVE, COULDN'T MOVE AT ALL...

"...WHICH MEANT HE COULDN'T HUG PRINCESS DANIELLE-- AND THEN THE YUCK-BIRDS WERE FLYING ALL AROUND HIM...

"...AND THEN THE YUCK-BIRDS POOPED ON HIM AND THEN HE WAS SAD BECAUSE HE WAS FROZENED AND COVERED IN POOP AND COULDN'T HUG PRINCESS DANIELLE."

SWEET CHRISTMAS.

COVERED IN POOP *AND* CAN'T HUG PRINCESS DANIELLE? THAT'S A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH.

I KNOW.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

WHAT'RE YOU ASKING *ME* FOR?

BECAUSE YOU'RE THE ONE TELLING THE STORY.

OKAY. LET ME SEE IF I CAN REMEMBER WHERE WE LEFT OFF...

KING LUKE AND PRINCESS DANIELLE...

...SHE'S ALSO A SUPER HERO, BECAUSE A PRINCESS IS JUST A WEAK GIRL WAITING TO BE SAVED BY A PRINCE.

OH, PRINCESS DANIELLE IS THE GREATEST SUPER HERO OF ALL TIME.

IS SHE A BAD-ASS?

DID MOMMY TEACH YOU THAT WORD?

YEAH.

WELL... YEAH, PRINCESS DANIELLE IS A BAD-ASS. AND THAT'S IMPORTANT...

"...BECAUSE KING LUKE WAS FROZEN IN PLACE BY HATE-FACE, WHICH MEANT THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT TO PROTECT THE KINGDOM.

"ONE BY ONE, THE GREATEST HEROES OF THE KINGDOM WERE OVERPOWERED BY HATE-FACE.

"EVERYONE WHO TRIED TO STOP HATE-FACE FELL VICTIM TO HIS SINISTER PLAN.

"WITH ALL THE HEROES FROZEN IN PLACE, NOTHING COULD STOP HATE-FACE."

IT LOOKED LIKE ALL HOPE WAS LOST.

ALL HOPE?

ALL OF IT-- EVEN THE EMERGENCY SUPPLY OF HOPE THAT NICK FURY KEPT HIDDEN IN ONE OF HIS SECRET BUNKERS.

AND THEN YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...

I KNOW!

LET ME TELL YOU.

"ONE OF PRINCESS DANIELLE'S HANDS TURNED INTO A SNAKE, AND THEN...AND THEN..."

I THOUGHT I WAS TELLING THE STORY.

YOU'RE TELLING IT ALL WRONG. YOU'VE FORGOTTEN PRINCESS DANIELLE'S SECRET WEAPON...

"...TIGER-GATOR!"

TIGER-GATOR?

SHE'S PART TIGER AND PART ALLIGATOR...AND HER NAME IS JESSICA...AND SHE CAN FLY...BUT NOT REALLY, MORE LIKE SHE CAN JUMP REALLY FAR.

HUG

"PRINCESS DANIELLE RODE JESSICA THE TIGER-GATOR, AND THEN...AND THEN...THEY ATTACKED THE TROLLS THAT WORKED FOR HATE-FACE.

"AND THEN...HER HANDS TURNED TO SNAKES AND STARTED EATING THE FACES OF THE TROLLS, AND THEN JESSICA THE TIGER-GATOR ATE THE YUCK-BIRDS AND THEIR POOP, BECAUSE THAT'S TIGER-GATOR'S FAVORITE FOOD.

TIGER-GATOR'S FAVORITE FOOD IS YUCK-BIRDS AND THEIR POOP?

MAGIC POOP.

AND THEN...GUESS WHAT.

JESSICA THE TIGER-GATOR SAVED THE DAY?

NO. BECAUSE... BECAUSE...

...IT WAS THE MAGIC POOP.

IT *DID SOMETHING* TO JESSICA THE TIGER-GATOR...

"...IT TURNEDED HER BACK INTO A WOMAN, BUT NOT JUST ANY WOMAN--SHE WAS REALLY PRINCESS DANIELLE'S MOMMY.

"HATE-FACE TURNEDED QUEEN JESSICA INTO A TIGER-GATOR BECAUSE HE HATED HER BECAUSE SHE WAS STRONG AND BEAUTIFUL AND...AND..."

WHAT'S THE MATTER, SWEETIE? YOU LOOK UPSET.

THIS PART OF THE STORY MAKES ME SAD.

IF IT MAKES YOU SAD, WE CAN TELL ANOTHER STORY.

NO. THIS IS IMPORTANT.

"AND THEN...HATE-FACE FROZENED QUEEN JESSICA JUST LIKE HE FROZENED EVERYONE ELSE.

"WITH EVERYONE FROZENED, HATE-FACE STARTED TO MAKE FUN OF PRINCESS DANIELLE..."

HUGG

...BECAUSE PRINCESS DANIELLE WAS ALL ALONE AND LONELY, AND HATE-FACE THOUGHT THAT WAS FUNNY.

PRINCESS DANIELLE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

SHE STARTED TO CRY, AND HATE-FACE LAUGHED BECAUSE SHE WAS CRYING...AND THEN...

"...AND THEN...PRINCESS DANIELLE KNEW SHE HAD TO STOP HATE-FACE OR SHE WOULD BE ALONE FOREVER, SO SHE STARTED TO BEAT HIM UP BUT NOT REALLY BECAUSE HER SNAKE HANDS WERE HUNGRY...

"...SO THEY ATE HIS UGLY FACE!

"AND THEN...HATE-FACE HAD A REGULAR FACE UNDER HIS UGLY FACE, BUT HE WAS STILL HATE-FACE BECAUSE HE STILL HATED EVERYTHING EVEN THOUGH HIS FACE WAS NORMAL.

"IT WAS VERY SAD.

"AND THEN...AND THEN... PRINCESS DANIELLE USED HER FLOWER POWERS TO TALK TO THE FLOWERS.

"AND THEN THE FLOWERS STARTED SINGING BECAUSE THEY WERE MAGICAL AND COULD SING... AND THEN...

"...AND THEN...THE TROLLS BECAME HAPPY BECAUSE THE FLOWER SONGS WERE SO BEAUTIFUL IT MADE THEM FORGET HOW TO HATE--EVEN HATE-FACE."

WOW. THOSE ARE PRETTY STRONG FLOWERS.

I KNOW. BUT THAT'S NOT THE BEST PART.

"THE BEST PART IS THAT PRINCESS DANIELLE USED HER MAGIC POWERS TO UNFROZENED KING LUKE AND QUEEN JESSICA.

"AND THEN...BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T FROZENED ANYMORE, KING LUKE AND QUEEN JESSICA COULD GIVE PRINCESS DANIELLE A HUG AND EVERYONE IN THE WORLD WAS HAPPY BECAUSE EVERYONE COULD GET A HUG."

THE END.

WOW.

PAPA--THANK YOU FOR TELLING ME THAT STORY. IT'S MY NEW FAVORITE.

WELL, YOU KNOW SOMETHING, PEANUT--WE KINDA TOLD THAT STORY TOGETHER.

LIKE A TEAM?

LIKE THE ***BEST TEAM EVER.***

THAT'S BECAUSE WE'RE BADASS.

WHAT OTHER WORDS HAS YOUR MOM BEEN TEACHING YOU?

HUGGY

...AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

POWER MAIL

Send us your letters at mheroes@marvel.com and mark them "okay to print"!

Let me tell you about this kid. Her name is Astrid, she's four years old and she's one of the most amazing human beings I've ever met. She is smart, funny, her favorite snake is the black mamba and she loves super heroes. Ask her about any super hero, and she can tell you who they are and their origin story, but it doesn't stop there, because Astrid loves to make up her own stories. She often starts by saying, "Tell me a story," but it only takes about a minute before she takes over the narrative, bending it and shaping it into something of pure brilliance. She is what most comic-book writers start out being, and what we work so hard to continue being.

This issue of LUKE CAGE – the final issue – has been in development since I started writing POWER MAN AND IRON FIST. From the very beginning, I wanted to write an entire issue dedicated to Luke being a father spending time with his daughter Danielle. In the entire history of Luke Cage (which spans more than 40 years), there is nothing more interesting or compelling than his becoming a father. Unfortunately, for various reasons, I never got to build on the relationship between Luke and Danielle the way I wanted to, and for me, my combined run on POWER MAN AND IRON FIST and LUKE CAGE will always be less than it could have been because I never really got to explore what truly makes Luke one of the best characters in the Marvel Universe – his love and dedication to his daughter.

When word came that LUKE CAGE was ending, I knew I had to do a story revolving around Luke and Danielle. Inspired by a classic issue of UNCANNY X-MEN and the movie *The Princess Bride*, I decided to craft a simple tale of a father telling his daughter a bedtime story. It seemed easy at the time, but proved to be far more challenging than I had anticipated. The problem was that Danielle wasn't a character in the story so much as she was a prop – Luke was telling her the story, and she was sitting back and listening. It wasn't working at all. And that's where Astrid comes in.

If there is any sense of reality or authenticity to this issue, it is because it was inspired by the fine art of telling Astrid a story, her taking over the narrative, turning it into her own thing and making it so much better than when it started. What could have easily been a sad or cynical issue for me to write turned into the most fun I've had in many years, and it is all because of a four-year-old girl whose imagination burns so bright that it brings light to everyone around her.

I want to thank everyone who has supported LUKE CAGE, and give special shout-outs to my editorial team, as well as the artists who made each issue come alive. I dedicate this final issue of LUKE CAGE to my dear friend Astrid. Not only does she inspire me, she reminds me of why I love super heroes and comic books. Astrid, this one is for you. Love you, kid.

David F. Walker

ZONE